

VZCZCXRO0248
OO RUEHCN RUEHGH RUEHVC
DE RUEHIN #0467/01 1051044
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 151044Z APR 09
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1410
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1912

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000467

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP, IO; GENEVA FOR HOHMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [WHO](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT TIGHT-LIPPED AS RUMORS OF WHA OBSERVER
DEAL SWIRL

Classified By: The Director for reasons 1.4(b/d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Despite widespread media speculation, Taiwan officials have been tight-lipped, both publicly and in private, about possible talks with China on Taipei's bid for WHA observer status. Although there are a number of sensitive political issues to be resolved, public statements by President Ma and other Taiwan officials suggest that they will accept arrangements that should be unobjectionable to Beijing. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Despite the rapidly approaching date for the World Health Assembly (WHA) annual meeting in Geneva and widespread media speculation, Taiwan officials are cagey about a possible deal that would grant Taiwan observer status at the May 18-27 meeting. Both publicly and in private meetings with visiting U.S. officials, President Ma Ying-jeou and his closest advisors have expressed optimism that Taiwan and China will work out an arrangement. They have declined to say, however, whether or how they are communicating with Beijing or what a deal might look like. In an April 14 conversation with AIT Pol Chief, MOFA IO Division Deputy Director General Lily Hsu was similarly cagey, but hinted that negotiations are underway and that her office is providing advice on technical issues.

¶3. (C) Among the issues Taiwan and the PRC need to work out are nomenclature, who would lead Taiwan's delegation, how an invitation would be issued, and whether such an invitation would be annual or open-ended. Based on public comments made by President Ma and other senior Taiwan officials, none of these seem to present insuperable obstacles. The following are the projections of Taipei-based academics, analysts and officials of how these questions will be resolved.

What Name Would Taiwan Use?

¶4. (C) At a March 21 press conference, Ma indicated that Taiwan would prefer to participate under the title "the Republic of China" or "Taiwan," but would accept the name "Chinese Taipei." Academic contacts and other local analysts are confident the PRC would accept this nomenclature.

How Long Would the Invitation Be Valid?

¶5. (C) Aware that the PRC might balk at granting his government a "benefit" that could also accrue to a future pro-independence DDP administration, President Ma and

National Security Advisor Su Chi have told U.S. officials that Taiwan will accept observer status on an annual basis. MOFA IO DG Paul Chang made essentially this same point in an April 14 news conference, during which he described without objection the WHO Secretariat's annual practice of notifying observers of the time and place of that year's WHA meeting.

Who Would Issue the Invitation?

¶6. (C) How Taiwan is invited will have some bearing on how its participation is portrayed. Local contacts see three possible sources of an invitation to Taiwan: a direct invitation from WHO Director General Margaret Chan, an invitation extended as the result of a specific resolution of the WHA, or an invitation from Beijing to attend as a part of its delegation. Of these, the first is clearly the simplest and least politically objectionable to both sides. We expect Taiwan would be asked to participate simply as an "Observer."

While Taipei would find itself in somewhat odd company in the that group - the Order of Malta (i.e., the successor to the Knights of Malta) and two Red Cross groups are the other organizations who included in that category - this should not be a significant concern to Ma. (Note: The PRC would presumably object to including Taiwan in either of the other two categories of observers, those from a non-member state and those invited in accordance with a WHA resolution.)

Who Would Lead Taiwan's Delegation?

TAIPEI 00000467 002 OF 002

¶7. (C) On April 14, citing unnamed Taiwan government sources, local media reported that Health Minister Yeh Chin-chuan will lead Taiwan's delegation. In a conversation with Pol Chief, MOFA IO DDG Hsu declined to speculate on the composition of a possible Taiwan delegation. Eric Teo, the well-informed deputy in Singapore's representative office in Taipei, suggested that Yeh would likely be acceptable to the PRC were he to do so in a capacity other than government Minister.
YOUNG